(b) whether certain countries have been kept out of the reach of this facility, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) in the current scenario of global terrorism, how far it would be safe to run this project in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) to (c) In view of the prevailing security environment in the country, proposal for introducing visa on arrival scheme has been shelved.

Visit of King of Bhutan to India

283. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the King of Bhutan visited India during September last and had discussions with the Prime Minister and other Government functionaries on matters of mutual interest between the two countries; and

(b) if so, the details of discussions held and the final decisions arrived at?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, King of Bhutan, paid a State visit to India from September 14 to 18, 2003. During the visit, President and Vice-President held talks with the King. PM, DPM, EAM and Minister of Finance separately called on him.

During the course of the visit, Government of India agreed to package of assistance on the Indian contribution to projects and programmes under Bhutan's 9th FiveYear Plan (2002-2007). A Memorandum of Understanding under the aegis of which India would facilitate the preparation of a Detailed Project Report on the 900 MW Punatsangchu Hydro-electric Power Project in central Bhutan was also signed.

The visit provided a useful opportunity for exchange of views at the highest level on a wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern,

including the presence of Indian insurgent groups in Bhutan and the measures being undertaken by the Royal Government of Bhutan to persuade the militants to move out of Bhutan. Both sides agreed to continue working closely on the issue. The two governments reiterated that they will not allow their territories to be used by anyone for carrying out activities inimical to each other's national interests and the friendly relations between them.

Joint Strategy of India, China and Russia for Restoration of Sovereignty of Iraq

284. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether on the side-lines of UN General Assembly Session in New York, the Foreign Ministers of India, China and Russia met and decided to evolve a joint strategy for restoration of sovereignty to the people of Iraq; and

(b) if so, the details of the strategy, if any, evolved and the talks held in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) The second trilateral meeting at Foreign Ministers' level between India, Russia and China was hosted by India this year on the sidelines of the 58th session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York on 23 September, 2003. Several issues of international concern were discussed by the three countries, including the situation in Iraq. There was no 'joint strategy' between the three on this issue. However, the approaches of India, Russia and China with regard to the Iraq issue were broadly similar. The three countries were of the view that what was needed was a political rather than military solution to the crisis. They agreed on the need to restore sovereignty to the Iraqi people and the right of the Iraqi people to determine their political future. The three sides also expressed the belief that the U.N. should have a central role in the political and reconstruction process.